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HIPPOLYTUS TEMPORIZES

HIPPOLYTUS TEMPORIZES

A Play in Three Acts

BY
H. D.



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*I worship the greatest first —
(it were sweet the couch,
the brighter ripple of cloth
over the dipped fleece;
the thought: her bones
under the flesh are white
as sand which along a beach
covers but keeps the print
of the crescent shapes beneath:
I thought:
between cloth and fleece,
so her body lies.)*

*I worship first the great —
(ah, sweet, your eyes —
what God, invoked in Crete,
gave them the gift to part
as the Sidonian myrtle-flower
suddenly, wide and swart,
then swiftly,
the eye-lids having provoked our hearts —
as suddenly beat and close.)*

*I worship the feet, flawless,
that haunt the hills —
(ah, sweet, dare I think,
beneath fetter of golden clasp,
of the rhythm, the fall and rise
of yours, carven, slight
beneath straps of gold that keep
their slender beauty caught,
like wings and bodies
of trapped birds.)*

*I worship the greatest first —
(suddenly into my brain —
the flash of sun on the snow,
the fringe of light and the drift,
the crest and the hill-shadow —
ah, surely now I forget,
ah, splendour, my goddess turns;
or was it the sudden heat,
beneath quivering of molten flesh,
of veins, purple as violets?)*

ISLES OF GREECE

Spring, 1920

PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

HIPPOLYTUS — son of Theseus and Hippolyta.

HYPERIDES — courtier of Athens.

Leader of the Huntsmen.

Band of Huntsmen.

Boy — from a wrecked Cyprian vessel.

PHÆDRA — wife of Theseus, King of Athens.

MYRRHINA — serving-lady to Phædra.

Nurse — to Phædra.

Band of serving-women.

Servants, musicians, etc.

ARTEMIS.

HELIOS.

THE ARGUMENT

THIS is the familiar story of Theseus of Athens. Hippolytus, his son and the child of Hippolyta, inflames a later wife, the Cretan princess, Phædra, in her palace outside Træzen in Attica. Theseus, King of Athens, finds his rival in his own son, the step-son of his foreign queen.

How Hippolytus returns the affection so secretly and tragically bestowed has become a legend, the prototype of unrequited passion for many centuries. Hippolytus is his mother again, frozen lover of the forest which maintains personal form for him in the ever-present vision, yea, even the bodily presence of the goddess Artemis.

Phædra by a trick (as we see in the second act of this play) gains the passion of the youth. The boy, as tradition has always maintained, in a frenzied drive along an infuriated seacoast, is broken and mercilessly battered by the waves. The consequence of his death to two of the Olympians is here set forth in the final act of this tragedy, *Hippolytus Temporizes*.

HIPPOLYTUS TEMPORIZES

• •

ACT I

(Below Troezen. A wild gorge or ravine cuts through the trees on to a flat, sandy beach.)

ARTEMIS. I heard the intolerable rhythm
and sound of prayer,
so I have hidden
where no mortals are,
no sycophant of priest
to mar my ease,
climbing impassible stairs
of rock
and forest shale
and barriers of trees:

someone will come
after I shun this place
and set a circle,
blunt end up,
of stones,
flattened and hewn,
and pile an altar,
but I shall have gone further
toward loftier barrier,
mightier trees;
bear, wolf and pard
I will entice with me,

that eyes' black fire
or yellow
flatter,
conjure,
feed desire,
conspire,
lead me yet further

to some loftier shelf,
untrodden;
unappeased,
I will disport at ease
and wait;
I will engage in thought and plot with
earth
how we may best efface
from Elaea
and all stony Peloponnese,
from wild Arcadia
and the Isthmian straits,
from Thrace and Locrian hills
(as isles are sunk
in overwhelming seas)
all Grecian cities
with the wild arbutus
and the luminous trees.

*(Enter HIPPOLYTUS, stumbling forward,
uncertain in the half-light.)*

HIPPOLYTUS. Here in the night,

here in the salt-whipped air,
you hide;
but where,
where,
where,
O mistress of the tide-line of the sea,
of the deep-sea self
and the implacable tide?

ARTEMIS. Again,
again,
intolerable prayer.

HIPPOLYTUS. I found trace of you on the mountain
stair,
within a fern-lined crevice
for the snare
set for a wild bird
showed who had been there,
the trap was sprung and the wild bird
was free;
queen of the peaked hills,
I have followed three
ecstatic linnets
who bewitched must bear
bright wings aloft
to turn and whirr and fall,
having no motive but to whirr and
whirr,
to circle and to chatter and to care
for nothing further
than to scream and call,

so I have learned their bird-notes
and so follow
like a wild linnet
Artemis,
Artemis —

ARTEMIS. O madness of wood-speech —

HIPPOLYTUS. I have implored the adder
and the bear,
the lynx,
the pard,
the panther
for some prayer,
some charm,
some peril to entrap your feet;
I have intrigued for many days
to meet
some kindly serpent
who might name your name,
so I might lay in wait
to lure, to hiss
like a wood-creature,
Artemis,
Artemis —

ARTEMIS. He would betray —

HIPPOLYTUS. Wild,
wild,
wild,
wild,
O fair,
I have cajoled,

implored,
seared the bright air
with your bright name
that like an arrow tears
my heart
to speak it;
I have imperilled,
shamed the very stars
with brighter shaft,
with more imperious flame
of blinding light and fervour,
Artemis —

ARTEMIS. Again.

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
are you near?
O listen,
pause and hear,
bright queen
and phantom —

ARTEMIS. He bends and touches
the inviolate sand —

HIPPOLYTUS. O wild,
wild,
wild,
O sweet,
is this the shape and pattern
of your feet
or some bright flower

blown here from other lands?
is this some blossom
wafted from your hands
or the white trail of phosphorescent
sea?
is this flower shaken from some wood-
land tree
or have the stars trailed down
to brush the land?

ARTEMIS. The broken weed,
the scattered broken shell —

HIPPOLYTUS. Wild,
wild,
wild,
wild,
O dear,
I have inflamed and torn the dispas-
sionate air
with sound of flute
and note of song
and metre —

ARTEMIS. I fear —

HIPPOLYTUS. There,
there,
there,
there I see —

ARTEMIS. Ah me —

HIPPOLYTUS. There,
there,
there,

there,
O star,
queen of the sea-cliff
and the mountainous air
that stings and burns
and lightens us like wine,
O queen and mistress —

ARTEMIS. Beware —

HIPPOLYTUS. Wondrous,
O fair
like some tall supple sapling
or some rare
young warrior
with his glittering arms and spear,
call, call
your silver wolf-hounds,
dart your spear,
and fling your arrows,
can they rend and tear
and wound me
as the arrows of your hair
that flame and burn
as if some travelling meteor
had dropped its mantle
where the laurels burn?
do I — I fear?
nay goddess, exquisite and dear —
O turn —
ARTEMIS. I must be off,
Hippolytus, you have crossed

my path
too often —

HIPPOLYTUS. Witness each copse and glen
where every time I found you
I set up
a lesser goddess
silver-cold
and wrought
by the most exquisite craftsmen —

ARTEMIS. No craftsman may imprison
my swift feet —

HIPPOLYTUS. Nay wild and sweet,
but song may yet entrap you,
fire and rhythm
nay yet contain the ecstasy
and the heat
cold like white lightning —

ARTEMIS. O what,
what,
what, Hippolytus,
do you seek?

HIPPOLYTUS. I seek as a wood-lover,
O wild heart,
the very pulse and passion of your feet,
I scale the height for wild deer
but I ask
of every stone upturned,
of the moss print,
of scattered shells
and broken acorn cups,

of every grass blade trodden
and the earth
sprinkled with unaccustomed silver
drift
of sand
and delicate seed-pearls
from the east,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
has she passed?

ARTEMIS. You waste your life
in shadowing Artemis.

HIPPOLYTUS. Can any waste his life
in fervid worship?

ARTEMIS. What of the city,
the demands of kingship?

HIPPOLYTUS. My city is the forest,
I its high priest

ARTEMIS. There is a goddess
and a priest who frowns —

HIPPOLYTUS. You have no rival
in the windless towns —

ARTEMIS. The streets are fervid,
the town squares are rife —

HIPPOLYTUS. With what, O mistress,
that concerns our life?

ARTEMIS. The streets are rabid
with small talk and dire —

HIPPOLYTUS. What talk, O queen,

intolerate, white like fire?

ARTEMIS. I stand intolerate with disgust
not hate —

HIPPOLYTUS. What tale has reached you,
of what wicked thing?

ARTEMIS. A tale of Athens' queen,
of Athens' king —

HIPPOLYTUS. Alas, my dotard sire,
my captured father —

ARTEMIS. Beware the capturer
who may snare another —

HIPPOLYTUS. You speak, O queen,
an impotent phrase
and shame me
who but praise
your beauty
O white flower,
O passionate maid —

ARTEMIS. How do I mock?
speak, should I share
detachment,
chastity
and fervid thought
with *her*?

HIPPOLYTUS. What pointless question —
tell me if you dare
what day has passed
and witnessed my neglect,
what altar has been empty
or what fair

white statue
of what distant fane
accosts you
to complain
that its bright throat
was bare of any wild flower?

ARTEMIS. Alas,
no day
has witnessed lack of prayer,
alas, no statue
ever has been bare
of mountain lily
or wild-lily chaplet;
alas,
the very forests
bend and sway
bearing aloft frail incense
from the fires
that you have lit
on every altar base;
alas, no place is empty of you
and your perilous fervour —

HIPPOLYTUS. Then stay,

stay,
stay —

ARTEMIS. Alas,
alas,
alas,
I would escape,
myself escape from all men's songs

and praying;
I can not breathe,
I can not rest nor sleep;
ever and ever as the wild trees, soft,
bend over to embrace
and breathe me back,
back to the very substance of the forest,
at just that moment
as I loose my shape,
become immortal, evanescent,
essence of wood-things
and no more a goddess,
at just that moment
when I would attain immortal suste-
nance
and gain my rest,
some prayer arises dimming tree and
forest
and I must answer those who pray the
goddess,
a goddess rise and help
or slay
or heal or bless;
I must retain the god-like attribute
when such as you appeal;
ah, you, you most,
you trap, you trick, you take —
I traced this runnel
from the farthest hills
to this sea-shelter,

this remote sea-cove,
lonely, immanent, where peril
I thought had made all safe,
but you,
you like a bird,
Hippolytus,
must follow —

HIPPOLYTUS. O fair —

ARTEMIS. Have I no peace,
no quiet anywhere?
you trick,
you trap, Hippolytus,
a goddess in your snare.

HIPPOLYTUS. Say rather
you have trapped,
have stricken me —

ARTEMIS. I have not lured you here
nor anywhere —

HIPPOLYTUS. There is a lure more potent
than mere prayer —

ARTEMIS. What lure, what lure, Hippolytus —
but beware —

HIPPOLYTUS. The lure of frenzied feet,
of webbed gold hair —

ARTEMIS. I am not woman
nor of womankind —

HIPPOLYTUS. To such, O mistress,
I am blind, blind, blind —

ARTEMIS. What of this rumour
that provokes the streets —

HIPPOLYTUS. Rumour of bees, of wasps,
of unclean tame beasts —

ARTEMIS. Rumour of bees and wasps
and of dishonour —

HIPPOLYTUS. O queen, O mistress,
speak not of that fever —

ARTEMIS. Yea, I am told charms call you
to her favour —

HIPPOLYTUS. Not I — not I — I am no wanton's
lover —

ARTEMIS. This wanton holds a place
besides a king —

HIPPOLYTUS. A king of cities,
of no spirit-bride —

ARTEMIS. But go — but go —
they say her lust invokes

HIPPOLYTUS. Nothing, I say nothing
my fire provokes —

ARTEMIS. I do not stay to rival
anyone —

VOICES *Never in porch or corridor*
(*distant*). *can love come,*
never to us who died young,
long ago,
long ago,

HIPPOLYTUS. What are these voices?

ARTEMIS. These are my maidens
who are wroth to see
me
loitering with a mortal.

HIPPOLYTUS. I am no mortal.

ARTEMIS. Boastful and hot as ever.

HIPPOLYTUS. Hot on the trail,
hot, hot, in my desire
to trace you in the forest,
in the brake,
in tangle of the wild larch,
through the stretch
of pine and poplar
where the intoxicant scent
reels and transports me
of the flowering
wild grapes —

ARTEMIS. The grapes give stronger wine
in Troezen town —

HIPPOLYTUS. No wine can tempt me
from the blossoming wood —

ARTEMIS. Red roses burn away
the flowering tree —

HIPPOLYTUS. Nay, let me share your solitude
by the sea —

ARTEMIS. Share, share the mind
with fierce companion mind,
poetic frenzy with another blind
with rapturous fire
of the enchanter's harp,
share, share the mind
or love with any lover
but beware:
the rapture of my loneliest crags

none share —

HIPPOLYTUS. But I —

But I —

following the staggering wild deer
and fleet hind,

breaking the wood-branch,

struggling with the vine

that falls and swings

and tangles as it sways,

I follow and I share abandonment
with Artemis.

ARTEMIS. None share

but womankind.

VOICES *Never in porch or corridor*

(*distant*). *can love come,*

never to us who died young

long ago,

long ago.

HIPPOLYTUS. What curious echo.

ARTEMIS. My maidens,

go,

go,

go —

HIPPOLYTUS. Where can I go

for you are everywhere —

ARTEMIS. Not where the Cyprian

weaves her perilous snare.

HIPPOLYTUS. You lie —

this is no place to speak her name —

ARTEMIS. Her name is everywhere,

her ways are dire —

HIPPOLYTUS. Do you, white goddess,
slander spirit-fire?

ARTEMIS. Spirit of lust you mean,
the dangerous mother —

HIPPOLYTUS. Mistress of danger, aye,
and luminous æther —

ARTEMIS. You mean the cruel one,
the Cytherian?

HIPPOLYTUS. You, you are cruel; no
I mean another —

ARTEMIS. What spirit, speak
and who is this I slander?

HIPPOLYTUS. You do belittle a most gracious
name —

ARTEMIS. What name, what spirit,
devot of what fane?

HIPPOLYTUS. Her fane the forest is
and I her lover —

ARTEMIS. I say our paths part
and our ways forever —

HIPPOLYTUS. Nay, nay, we meet
in deep love for another —

ARTEMIS. What love, what love
may bind our hearts together?

HIPPOLYTUS. Love of Hippolyta,
my loveliest mother.

ARTEMIS. You had the hills,
the willows,
white ash,

poplar
blent into one form,
true,
lithe tree-boughs for a mother.

HIPPOLYTUS. Hippolyta, the very name
a rill, a river or a faun
and evil
for a father.

ARTEMIS. Theseus is great.

HIPPOLYTUS. You speak,
O queen,
impotent phrase
and mock
the sting, the pain,
you, you alone of all the gods
who take
unfailing worship from me.

ARTEMIS. No mortal measures stature
with a spirit.

HIPPOLYTUS. But spirits grieve and grow like mortals
desperate.

ARTEMIS. My spirit, rapturous,
scales Olympos' height.

HIPPOLYTUS. Not thine,
not thine,
not thine,
O Artemis,
it haunts the wood-path
desolate

even as mine.

ARTEMIS. You desecrate.

HIPPOLYTUS. You shun Olympos
Artemis
and its shale
holds nothing for you
sweeter than the forest,
no ecstasy holier than the vine's cold
scent,
the fragrance of the larch
and the wild pine,
no tenderness can keep you
in God's palace
from whelps that wander
desolate at night.

ARTEMIS. You are no whelp
of mine.

HIPPOLYTUS. As she was yours
so I — I am your own —

ARTEMIS. No; Athens claims you
and the Athenian throne —

HIPPOLYTUS. I would not rule,
O I would only rest
forgetting everything
in this cold place.

ARTEMIS. You are half mortal,
and a mortal's heart
is never wholly god-like,
still and cold.

HIPPOLYTUS. No, no

I am not mortal;
only think
how my great mother
shaped me to her will;
I was her heart within her
and her steel;
O she was proud and valiant,
swift to kill,
relentless and impartial,
warrior still,
giving no space to woman vagaries
and all the woman weakness and wan
ill,
valiant and resolute and untamed
until
she bore me
for a lance,
a sword,
a spear.

ARTEMIS. Rashly;
too late repented and so died —

HIPPOLYTUS. O say it not
impartial, hard with pride;
you could have saved her
had you had the heart,
one grain, one seed of human kindly
love,
how is it you
who seek in wind and wet
the ferret as she writhes,

the smallest fox,
the deer in pain
could not have saved
Hippolyta
with arrow-swift
white lightning
for her beauty?

ARTEMIS. Gods may not
cut athwart
a mortal's fate.

HIPPOLYTUS. Then are the gods
no greater than mere men?

ARTEMIS. Sometimes less great.

HIPPOLYTUS. You mock,
cryptic and cold,
hard and imperious,
you might have saved
(who save the tiniest fox)
my mother.

ARTEMIS. I will not stay and argue with a man
for you are that
for all your fragile and imperious
length,
your pale set features
and your woman's grace.

HIPPOLYTUS. A woman's grace?
I who have conquered
all this perilous cliff
and climbed the shale —

ARTEMIS. And she,

did our alert Hippolyta less?

HIPPOLYTUS. O mock me not,
mock not
my bitterness;
I know, I kneel,
her white soul is my strength,
let me stay with you as she stayed,
let me hunt with you,
rest by your white side,
take me
a servant.

ARTEMIS. Hippolyta had rare grace
and holiness;
she was a woman.

HIPPOLYTUS. But I, but I,
her white soul lives in me,
Hippolyta lives in me,
in my taut brain,
in all these thoughts
you say temper my prayers,
Hippolyta is my arrow-point,
my spear,
she listens now
in every bright and evanescent leaf,
she hears.

ARTEMIS. Hippolyta,
my friend,
chaste queen and ally,
valiant and fervid amazon
is dead.

HIPPOLYTUS. O if she were,
how simple,
O how meet
for I would walk in Athens like a man,
or like a prince
I'd stroll through Troezen's street,
not like a mad man
or a simple youth
struck down with some implacable
malady
of dream or frenzy
or mere impotence,
O if Hippolyta were only dead in me,
then I would sit in front of all the
throng
as Theseus bids me in the banquet
hall,
smiling and suave,
all of the courtier
great Theseus as you call him
bids me be;
O if Hippolyta were dead in me.

ARTEMIS. You weep —

HIPPOLYTUS. Yea,
all the woman's wit and woman's grace
you taunt me with
lives
though my mother died;
and you it was
who tend the merest mole

let her slip from me,
even as I lay
a weakling
and an infant
in her arms
gone marble;
not my weight
nor all my just-born heat
could comfort her,
and you, you, you,
goddess, the first, the great,
let her so perish
who protect
the gull,
the swallow,
the wild owl,
the tern.

ARTEMIS. Peace, child.

HIPPOLYTUS. Yes, let me rest,
you are the mother,
you the nearest;
you are a spirit,
spirit even as she,
somewhere not here;
you, you
are somewhere else,
not here, I know;
I am not here
while thus I talk with you.

ARTEMIS. Seek not too far—

HIPPOLYTUS. Or seek,
seek,
seek

only a little further.

ARTEMIS. Tempt not the gods —

HIPPOLYTUS. Are gods then weak
like mortals?
can we tempt?

ARTEMIS. Too well.

HIPPOLYTUS. Mother.

ARTEMIS. Nay, nay,
you are no son, no child of mine,
in you yet lives the strong and valiant
soul
of Theseus of Athens;
should I cherish here
this prince of Athens,
bid him to betray
his kingship
and the kings that after him
may sway all Attica,
then were the gods,
Zeus, Pallas and Another
wroth with me.

*(She bends back her head, seeming to
search the air above her.)*

Do you not sense nor see
this fluttering
of bright garments

and bright wings?
the woods are mine
but not the hearts of kings.

(Halloing from a distance. The whole of the forest becomes blurred in a curious white mist. As the mist gradually disperses, HIPPOLYTUS is seen wandering as if struck blind or with fear of blindness.)

HYPERIDES enters, wandering across the sand, not perceiving the prince.)

HYPERIDES. Religion is all very well I say,
yea
let religion have its place,
and prayer
in temple and in temple corridor,
lay the white-grape
in the sun-smitten porch,
the knot of fish upon Poseidon's floor,
the wild-grape
on the threshold of the king
of frenzy
to Iacchos — it is well;
let tall Athene have the broken spear,
give Helios the harp
and the harp string;
yea, worship is a thing
that's well enough

in its own place,
in porch and corridor;
what I object to
is this wilfulness
that frets
that rages
that inhibits mirth,
this boy infatuation
for a wraith;
a wraith?
what sound?
only the merest thrush
or summer owl;
yea, even this wild-wood worship
has its place,

(Louder.) yea, I have said
even the wilderness
should have its share,
an altar here,
a heap of round stones there;

(He shouts.) Yea,
I have said
even the wilderness
should have its share
of praise.

*(He shudders suddenly and starts as he
half discerns the wraith-form of HIP-
POLYTUS.)*

Queen,

goddess,
sorceress.

(HIPPOLYTUS *appears as in a maze. He gropes forward.*)

HYPERIDES. Gods,
I am growing murky
with white sweat,
what trick,
what game,
why do you torture us?

HIPPOLYTUS. Who are you?

HYPERIDES. O prince have done
with all this murky game,
come out,
come forth,
demand your place in life,
your share in power
and social intercourse;
what is it?
why this taut
and stiffened frame,
these eyes
fixed like the wild cat?
you are the victim of some evil charm
or devil magic.

HIPPOLYTUS. No, no, Hyperides,
I see you well,
I know you,
you are just like all the rest;

your eyes are round and full
yet dark with fright,
your limbs are firm and carved of some
 dark bronze,
your head is set
like some young Pythian god;
you are a statue in the halls of kings —
but leave me.

HYPERIDES. Part of my duty,
part of my content,
my fate, indeed my greatest happiness
is to be servant of a mighty prince,
son of great Theseus,
Athens' potentate.

HIPPOLYTUS. Your Theseus,
your Athens
make me sick.

HYPERIDES. It charms you to be wilful.

HIPPOLYTUS. I hate you
and your courtier-like suave face.

HYPERIDES. Are you
(I ask
in all solicitude)
so much then, the superior of us all?

HIPPOLYTUS. Ask of the wrestling field,
the track of Limnas.

HYPERIDES. Your steeds are swifter,
your white arm most fit,
but of your mind?

HIPPOLYTUS. My mind is well enough

in solitude.

HYPERIDES. Prince,
I too would enjoy to hunt
still further in the forest,
but the king,
Theseus
commands —

HIPPOLYTUS. Tell to your king,
your Theseus,
that his son
seeks in the hills, the valleys,
in the plains, the rivers
to recall the trace
of one
long since forgotten.

HYPERIDES. Far better
for your own inheritance
as son and prince
than that late Amazon —

HIPPOLYTUS. Ah speak — speak on —
how gladly will this place
be joyous witness
of blood-sacrifice.

HYPERIDES. Prince,
peace,
I do assure you I but sought
when all the other courtiers took fright,
the wild-wood for you;
and I followed straight
the upright vertical steep cliff

then down again vertical
even though I fell.

HIPPOLYTUS. I tell you
you are fit to stand
within the halls of kings
in bronze,
the perfect servant
of the imperfect prince.

HYPERIDES. Then come.

HIPPOLYTUS. Why do you urge me;
I am well enough.

HYPERIDES. Come back.

HIPPOLYTUS. Where?

HYPERIDES. Home.

HIPPOLYTUS. That palace with its incense
and its love-rites?

HYPERIDES. Surely the palace
is a gracious place,
and the set palace garden with its ter-
race,
its fountains,
its impenetrable grove
of sweet myrtle,
its beds of hidden violets.

HIPPOLYTUS. That woman
with her various tricks
and magic?

HYPERIDES. The queen?

HIPPOLYTUS. Queen of your sort,
queen of the weakling

king,
Theseus of Athens.

HYPERIDES. My lord —

HIPPOLYTUS. Yes, tell the king
his son has jeered at him,
shout to the woods
that he has gained no love
with all his senile Greek urbanities;
tell Theseus of Athens he begot
when once in all his life
he showed his strength
(and that ignobly)
a spear, a shaft, of lightning
for a son,
and that son loves in all the world
no queen
of spice and perfume
but the immortal flower
bred in the storm,
sister of ice and wind,
queen only of the soul,
white Artemis.

*(The members of the band of hunters have
entered gradually and grouped them-
selves about the two.)*

HYPERIDES. He rages still.

HUNTSMAN. Let him rage on,
the fiercer,
soonest over.

HIPPOLYTUS. Rage, rage, rage, rage,
O wonder
of wild, wild feet,
O glistening of bright hair —

(The boy from a wrecked Cyprian vessel steps forward.)

Boy. But where?

HIPPOLYTUS. O here,
O there,
O here and there and nowhere —
now she is here
and now she has dismayed
my very eye-balls
played some trick upon me,
burning with vivid brilliance
but to mock
with greater darkness
and so disappear.

Boy. The sun climbs o'er the hill.

HIPPOLYTUS. Then is it day?

HYPERIDES. Alas,
you do display
a curious humour —

HIPPOLYTUS. Hyperides,
whose name might fire
and blaze and gleam
a trail like moon-stones
upon quiet water —
but a fool —

HYPERIDES. My lord —

HIPPOLYTUS. Go, go, go, go,
you tool of indolent Theseus,
with your friendly hirelings,
sycophant,
panderer,
go, for you are not worthy even to
kneel
on this white sand
nor feel anything
of the wonder of this land —

HYPERIDES. My prince, we find the sunrise
beautiful —

HIPPOLYTUS. Poor ignorant knave —

Boy. What, prince, has driven you wild?

HIPPOLYTUS. Who are you, child?

Boy. I am a stranger from a broken keel,
our boat floundered —

HIPPOLYTUS. But you kneel —

Boy. To you
who have such passion in your eyes,
I am reminded of the drowning men —

HIPPOLYTUS. I drown in forest waves of green
and foam —

HYPERIDES. Come then,
come home —

HIPPOLYTUS. Hyperides,
Hyperides,
be off —

HYPERIDES. O prince,

be reasonable —

HIPPOLYTUS. O obstinate
fool —

what is your reason
to this wild unrest?

HYPERIDES. Would you have music then?

HIPPOLYTUS. Music?

HYPERIDES. I sent back for the band of singing men
when we first found you —

HIPPOLYTUS. Music?

HYPERIDES. Begin.

(*to the musicians*). (*The musicians form in usual, conventional dance form. They chant or sing as if before some imaginary altar.*)

HIPPOLYTUS. O tear the strings,
have done with mockery
of set and stated time
of word and metre;
have done with all that tune,
throw the lyre down;
what word, what word
can tell the sudden rhythm
of her white feet
that even as a bird wing
fled?

HYPERIDES. Patience, O prince,
the form is well enough,
we patterned that
on the iambics brought

but late
by way of Cos
to Attica.

HIPPOLYTUS. What island impudence ;
O well enough
to frame a slight song
that some singing lad
proclaims within the hall
of some Demeter
stately and still,
or in a festival
beats out
to modulate the dancing feet
of country choristers.

HYPERIDES. What is song then
but measure to beat out
the tune
for feet to move by?

HIPPOLYTUS. Feet, feet, feet, feet,
what of the head, the heart,
the frenzy that swims up
like sudden tide
of full storm sea
at sun down?

HYPERIDES. You cannot catch the sea
within a song.

HIPPOLYTUS. What is song for,
what use is song at all
if it cannot imprison all the sea,
if it cannot beat down

in avalanche of fervour even the wind,
if it cannot drown out
our human terror?

HYPERIDES. Song is a thing
fitted to time and measure.

HIPPOLYTUS. Like our Hyperides'
subtle mind's
bright treasure —

HYPERIDES. O prince,
this peevish fit
is juvenile,
song has been set
by your great ancestors,
by singing muses,
by the priest that sings
before your father's palace even now,
in his own temple
up in Troezen yonder,
come back prince,
to the temple and the altar.

HIPPOLYTUS. Can you not see or feel?

HYPERIDES. My prince, we feel
the beauty of this sunrise —

HIPPOLYTUS. You feel nothing at all
and are a blatant hypocrite who think
to humour a mad prince —

HYPERIDES. We see the — ah —
splendour — yes —
of wood and tree —

HIPPOLYTUS. Be off, be gone,

your very presence is an insult
to this stately wood-land
and the holy shore,
you pandering nobleman,
you courtly bore
and sycophant.

HYPERIDES. Worse, worse
and more —

HIPPOLYTUS. More and much worse will come
if you delay,
O go, begone
tiresome young idiot —

HYPERIDES. And fool —

HIPPOLYTUS. Fool if you will
and gaping flattering tool
of impotent Theseus —

HYPERIDES. Impotent?

HIPPOLYTUS. If he were powerful and real
in his pretended fervour
then Phædra —

HYPERIDES. Hist —
take care —

HIPPOLYTUS. Take care of nothing,
not of gaping layers of men
if they are men at all
who neither see, nor think nor hear
nor feel —

HYPERIDES. Come, come —

HIPPOLYTUS. You'd best be gone —
say to the king

that prince Hippolytus is safe
for I — I know
you follow me to spy.

HYPERIDES. Nay king —

HIPPOLYTUS. Yes, all of you begone,
I would remain alone —

HYPERIDES. Prince, I must stay —

HIPPOLYTUS. Not you,
not you,
you are the worst of all,
if you must have a reason,
then go say
that prince Hippolytus
sent you back
to fetch the statue
by the hedge of flowering bay,
the garden statue
for this lonely sand —

HYPERIDES. Will the king understand?

HIPPOLYTUS. Have I not always given command
to place
statues by running waters
and in each rare place
I hunted?

HYPERIDES. Yea,
this is true.

HIPPOLYTUS. Go, go then all of you,
make a procession
bringing flowers and say
“Hippolytus waits,

Hippolytus waits alone
until we come."

HYPERIDES Prepare the way,
(*to the* make festival and rite of this,
musicians). we go.

(*Exit HYPERIDES, huntsmen and musicians.*)

HIPPOLYTUS. I am
alone —

Boy. O queen,
who saved us gracious from the sea,
we pray —

HIPPOLYTUS. Do you delay?

Boy. I could not go and leave you here
so wild
with eyes so lit with frenzy
and so prone
to sudden feverish trembling;
do you see
then this lady
in the bush and tree?

HIPPOLYTUS. I do not see my queen;
O I am tired and weary in the day,
the night was long
but reft with light and spray
like blossoming foam.

Boy. Will you not lie along this pelt
and rest?

(*The Boy unfastens his cloak and lays
it upon the sand.*)

The breath of fields is in it
and of loam.

(HIPPOLYTUS *flings himself face downward on the cloak.*)

- HIPPOLYTUS. I hear her voice,
I clasp her luminous knees —
BOY. It seems his lady is like mine
at home —
HIPPOLYTUS. I breathe the fragrance of her hands
like wine —
BOY. Yes, she is much, is very much
like mine —
HIPPOLYTUS. I pray, I pray, I pray
that you but come —
BOY. She will come for they always do
with prayer —
HIPPOLYTUS. I feel her breath, intoxicant
clear air —
BOY. They say her breath is the white
violet flower —
HIPPOLYTUS. You, you are right,
white violets for her hair —
BOY. Her knees are lustrous,
her white forehead shines —
HIPPOLYTUS. Shines in the mist
bound with its luminous band —
BOY. Her crown is plaited myrtle
and rose stem —
HIPPOLYTUS. I do not hear your words,

- your voice is song —
 BOY. Sleep drowns him now,
 poor prince, see he is gone —
 HIPPOLYTUS. Not gone — not gone —
 watch for me, lest she come —
 BOY. Prince I will wait,
 they go to fetch her now —
 HIPPOLYTUS. Her statue — but herself —
 make prayer for me —
 BOY. I will entreat the wild-wood
 and the sea —
 HIPPOLYTUS. Sing, sing, sing, sing,
 your song may bring her here —
 BOY. I sing, I watch, I wait
 with fervid prayer.

*(The Boy stoops over HIPPOLYTUS to fold
 the cloak about him.)*

- He sleeps.
 VOICES *Never in porch or corridor*
(far dis- *did love come,*
tant). *never to us who died young,*
long ago,
long ago.

ACT II

Evening (the same strip of seacoast. The statue of ARTEMIS has been set up).

PHÆDRA. O how I hate,
radiant, cold and drear,
Greece with its headlands,
Greece with icy fervour,
Greece with its high enchantment
and endeavour,
Greece and Greek cities
for their arrogance,
each with particular grace,
each claiming god
for some peculiar ardour,
differing each from each,
yet each complete,
spirit, mind, arrogance
of small material wealth,
each soul unto itself;
is there no merging,
no hint of the east?
no carelessness
nor impetuosity of speech?
can no one greet
my south!
O glorious,

sweet,
red, wild pomegranate-mouth?
O my heart breaks and burns,
yet can not conquer,
can not merge with this,
this world of radiance and rock
and ice and shale and peace.

MYRRHINA. Cease, Cretan lady,
queen of the red sands
and the imperious peak
of Ida
where Zeus reigns.

PHÆDRA. O how I hate
this world, this west, this power
that strives to reach
through river, town or flower,
the god or spirit that inhabits it;
O, is it not enough to greet
the red-rose
for the red, red sweet of it?
must we encounter
with each separate flower,
some god, some goddess?
must each peculiar hour,
dawn, day or night,
take its particular prayer?
why must we pause and bear
not only beauty
of each beautiful thing,
but suffer more, more, more,

the associated spirit with its power?
this tyranny of spirit
that is Greece;
speak, my Myrrhina,
must I long endure
this swarm of alien gods
and this cold shore?

MYRRHINA. O lady, lady, lady,
luminous more
than any spray of myrtle
or white flower
of the enchanted flowering citron-tree
that flowers and fruits
and each gleam separately,
the wax-sweet petal
by the fruit's rare gold,
listen nor count as cold
a land where purple decks your small-
est ways,
where a king follows
courting through long days.

PHÆDRA. What is the dotard love
of a dull king,
Myrrhina? I know
what love might have been.

MYRRHINA. O lady, lady, lady,
luminous more
than golden spray of orange
or white flower
of pearl and fire,

the citron and its leaf,
O glorious
beyond belief,
Phædra,
endure,
have strength a little more;
we shall prevail,
we will outrule this pallid shore
and sail
back to bright Crete,
its sun-lit slopes, its vales
of orange, citron,
its bright tree of myrtle;
we will escape,
radiant in all our power;
listen, endure,
O golden lily-flower.

PHÆDRA. We all think, every one,
sometime our power is broken,
our fame gone,
our beauty stricken,
and our graciousness
fit only for some dark and barren place,
where old, old women croak
about the loom
or pace and chatter
graceless in the sun.

MYRRHINA. Come, come
my lady,
myrrh-trees bend to bless

in Crete,
the very foot-fall
where you pass.
PHÆDRA. The tall myrrh-forest
of my distant land
has nothing now of loveliness,
its sand
white and pure gold
that drifts beneath the steps
of the king's built-up summer palaces,
holds no more marvellous glint,
nor any magic
lures me with old enchantments
and old songs:
O Crete shows dead and pallid
by the flame
and beauty
that has given Greece its fame.

Escape?
escape?
for me there is no place
can hide his fervour,
fervour of flame-lit face,
beauty as of the god that flees the sun.
MYRRHINA. Dearest, my lady,
do not speak of this,
O do not breathe however faint that
name,
peace, O my princess,

think of your great fame,
 remember Crete and all those palaces,
 remember all the glitter of your dead,
 recall the mighty pleasure of the king
 your father,
 and the blue, blue, of its walls,
 remember Phædra is above all, all,
 a queen.

PHÆDRA. Ah, friend,
 Myrrhina,
 once I might have been
 proud with gold head-dress
 like a flame-lit flower
 or candle set in some bright altar-niche;
 now I am stricken
 like a flame-struck bough.

(*Enter NURSE.*)

NURSE. Hist, hist my lady,
 mistress, fosterling—

PHÆDRA. What is it nurse,
 what is the news you bring?

NURSE. Your lord, your very lord,
 the infatuate king—

PHÆDRA. Permits?

NURSE. — will countenance,
 says you may do this thing.

PHÆDRA. O grace of wild, wild things,
 O swallow fair,
 O fair sea-swallow

flitting here and there,
O swallow
beating with insatiate wing,
the very pulse and centre of the air,
O swallow, swallow,
listening everywhere —

MYRRHINA. What is this fever,
this impassioned prayer?

PHÆDRA. — you took,
you severed with blue wing and fire
the very salt wind,
to deliver there,
back in bright Crete,
my message and my prayer.

MYRRHINA. Whom do you call,
'O mistress,
by this shrine?

PHÆDRA. I cry,
I call again
to her
who makes the birds her message-
bearer,
to her
who yokes the swallows to her car.

MYRRHINA. She seems distraught —
what message gave the king?

NURSE. He only granted after importunate
prayer,
that Phædra sleep by the cold water
here.

MYRRHINA. What —

rest without the palace of her lord?

NURSE.

Aye,

in a tent built up of cedar-wood,

hung over and around with canopies.

MYRRHINA.

What madness prompted

these strange fantasies?

NURSE.

Only despair,

fever

and lassitude.

PHÆDRA.

O nurse,

O nurse,

prepare

swiftly

the bedding,

pillows

stuffed with rare

plumes of the cygnet

and the eider-duck;

O nurse,

O nurse,

with care

spread the low couch

with softest coverings,

strip fair embroidery

from the palace wall,

get awnings

and a carpet

of soft fleece ;

spread cyclamen colour

on this icy sand,
hang curtains
vying
with the purple-fish;
make up the tent straightway;
bring the musicians,
all the singing band
of girls to stand about my tent
and keep
fever away;
at last,
at last,
I'll sleep.

(*Exit* NURSE.)

MYRRHINA. Have pity,
Artemis.

PHÆDRA. O queen
who rises regent from the sea,
I know at last
that you have answered me.

MYRRHINA. O queen
who watches loyal by the coast,
tender to all the host
of desperate wandering sea-men
lost at night,
goddess of hope and light,
guardian of vessels
broken by the storm,
see that our stricken Phædra

takes no harm.

PHÆDRA. You call then
to this pallid
Delphic queen?

MYRRHINA. Lady,
in fear,
in pain —

PHÆDRA. Think not of her,
Myrrhina,
there's another —

MYRRHINA. Mistress —

PHÆDRA. of lovers —

MYRRHINA. take care,
is not this strip of sand
holy and delicate,
and all the reaches
of this forest-land
her precinct?

PHÆDRA. There is no place
where my queen dare not come,
tall,
beautiful,
of city and high wall.

MYRRHINA. You dare affront
this chosen sanctity?

PHÆDRA. I'd build as often,
restless, ill at ease,
a small pavilion of bright stuffs
and woven
tapestries,

such as I've often slept in
safe at home.

MYRRHINA. That was the garden of the king your
father.

PHÆDRA. At this the pleasaunce of the prince my
lover.

MYRRHINA. You underestimate
this lady's strength —

PHÆDRA. As you this other —

MYRRHINA. O think of all her infallible strength
and pride,
queen of the deep-sea
and the implacable tide.

PHÆDRA. And you
of all her body frail and slender,
the grace that binds narcissus-white
her knees,
think friend
and ponder on her loveliness;
what, what are these,
cold and deliberate
to her
who owns the beaked vermilion hulls,
to her
powerful bright guardian
of the eastern sails?

MYRRHINA. I tell you,
we are broken and undone.

PHÆDRA. Nay,
my Myrrhina;

I felt
should Theseus grant this little whim,
then all were clear,
and my prayer melted him.

MYRRHINA. You will betray?

PHÆDRA. O when I see that pattern of heart's
fervour
and his father,
I ache with some old savagery
to turn
within the heavy leaden heart
of Theseus,
some simple, fragile thing,
omnipotent
single metal
with no flaw;
I'd turn and turn and turn
that little steel;
then, Theseus,
would you feel?

MYRRHINA. What good were that,
to murder Athens' King?

PHÆDRA. It would give me
some pleasure.

MYRRHINA. O lady, turn
from this dire pondering,
look deeper, deeper,
conjure holier reasoning,
call up your soul to shun this evil
thing;

O turn in prayer to some enchanted
portal,
some intimate temple
set with corridor;
think how pure colour tints those
sainted walls,
washed in and through and over
with ripe flowers,
think of the gold of saintliest lily-bud,
of lilies open like a scented cup;
O lady,
think,
pause,
pray
and conjure up
with deep emotion
and with holiest thought,
that shell of marble,
delicate temple wall;
breathe in your heart
the holiest scent of orange
that blows at noon
through those cool corridors,
some breath of citron
wafted over-seas,
imagine we were back again in Crete.

PHÆDRA. We are, we are, Myrrhina
loveliest, hear
that voice
that answers honey-clear

your prayer.

Boy *Where is the nightingale,
(sings). in what myrrh-wood and dim?
O let the night come black
for we would conjure back
all that enchanted him,
all that enchanted him.*

PHÆDRA. You see,
you see,
promise
and prophecy.

Boy *Where is the bird of fire,
(sings). in what packed hedge of rose?
in what roofed ledge of flower?
no other creature knows
what magic lurks within,
what magic lurks within.*

PHÆDRA. Eros speaks here,
Love's child
and child of fire.

Boy *Bird, bird, bird, bird we cry,
(sings). hear, pity us in pain,
hearts break in the sunlight,
hearts break in daylight rain,
only night heals again,
only night heals again.*

PHÆDRA. Bird,
bird,
bird,
bird we cry —

(*Enter Boy.*)

MYRRHINA. Peace,
lady,
lady —

child, what do you here?

BOY. I made a song
for the king bade me sing.

MYRRHINA. But of cold mountains,
of the water-fall,
of lilies cold and tall —

BOY. He bade me praise the queen,
his lady's rare
still beauty.

PHÆDRA. Aye,
she is fair,
and here,
here,
here she stands.

BOY. To guide the sea-men
to this little harbour —

PHÆDRA. Nay more —

MYRRHINA. Lady beware —

PHÆDRA. — a prince.

MYRRHINA. No —

PHÆDRA. My waiting-lady,
my companion here,
is jealous for my safety,
for my power.

MYRRHINA. Say rather

for the duty of a queen.

PHÆDRA. A queen,
a queen,
a queen,
O I have been
too long the mistress
of the stream and forest —

MYRRHINA. Take care —

PHÆDRA. She fears
for my high sanctity,
my holy pride,
she always watches,
always loiters near,
she and her sisters
hide about the forest,
they never leave me —

MYRRHINA. Lies,
lies,
lies.

PHÆDRA. You see,
I never meet Hippolytus
for these —

MYRRHINA. Perfidious —

PHÆDRA. — who watch
to hear and spy.

MYRRHINA. O piteous wretch.

PHÆDRA. See,
she maligns me,
she will tell you next —

BOY. What?

PHÆDRA. This —
that I am not,
never
could be —

MYRRHINA. Hi — st —

PHÆDRA. — Artemis.

MYRRHINA. O lies, O wretchedness.

PHÆDRA. But you,
you,
you
I pray,
I ask you this:
am I
or am I not,
the beauteous mistress
of the haunted grot
of innermost forest,
queen of light and shade
that flickers gold on gold,
light merged with flower,
flower merged with splendour
of the sun's pure flame,
answer and speak my name,
am I the mistress
and the innermost power
of the pure glade!

BOY. I am afraid.

PHÆDRA. Aye,
for you see,
you know that I am god,

you know I am no mortal
like this other
who shrinks and fears
before Love's holiest altar,
you,
you confess
that I am Artemis.

BOY. I never yet saw,
nay,
nor met a goddess.

PHÆDRA. But you have worshipped?

BOY. Aye,
afar.

PHÆDRA. Where?

BOY. — in Cyprus.

PHÆDRA. In Cyprus,
that might almost be in Crete.

MYRRHINA O wild,
(*to the* O fair,
statue). O sweet,
turn back,
turn back,
beware,
evil lurks here,
evil
and traitorous pleasure.

PHÆDRA. Say rather
we have built here in our thought,
the very temple
that you would entreat.

- MYRRHINA Lovely,
 (*to the* O restless feet,
 statue). where do you wander?
 where, where do you lurk?
 lovely,
 O loveliest look,
 look down,
 come soon.
- PHÆDRA. It is no use,
 She wanders with her brother
 Helios
 in some other world,
 distant and far from us —
 she wanders far
 with Helios her brother.
- MYRRHINA. Nay, nay but rather
 lurks very near,
 lurks very near —
- PHÆDRA. O have no fear, Myrrhina,
 she'll not hear.
- MYRRHINA. Ah, but this other —
- PHÆDRA. Has heard;
 heard;
 answered like a mystic bird,
 flying straight,
 giving spoken word —
- MYRRHINA. Word?
- PHÆDRA. The very song
 the boy has sung to us —
 is he not Eros?

MYRRHINA. O madness,
madness:
cease.

PHÆDRA. Nay, peace,
assuredly no call
escapes our lady,
beautiful
of high wall,
of fortress
and of every tributary —

MYRRHINA. Not Delphi,
not the isle
Delos.

PHÆDRA. Delphi is far,
Delos is but a name.

MYRRHINA. Beware —

PHÆDRA. So sing, lad,
sing again.

BOY *Bring myrrh and myrtle-bud,*
(sings). *bell of the snowy head*
of the first asphodel;

frost of the citron flower,
petal on petal, white
wax of faint love-delight;

flower, flower and little head
of tiny meadow-floret,
white, where no bee has fed;

*full of its honey yet
spilling its scented sweet,
spread them before her feet;*

*white citron, whitest rose,
(myrrh-leaves, myrrh-leaves enclose)
and the white violet.*

MYRRHINA. O wicked, wicked princess.

PHÆDRA. You see,
she still demurs,
is jealous —

MYRRHINA. O subtle, curious lady,
desperate queen —

PHÆDRA. Ah, once I might have been
desperate,
flayed and hurt —

MYRRHINA Maid
(to the statue). who enchants the host
of maidens,
flower of Delos,
O white, white lily
floating in the tide
of some still inland river,
frail and silver,
chastity undefiled,
innermost heart of sainted purity —

PHÆDRA. Is there a thing,
however white and clear,
purer than fire?

MYRRHINA. O mistress, mocking
with your subtle tongue,
be done.

PHÆDRA. Tell to your king,
your prince Hippolytus,
that I *am* done,
done with my pride,
my haughty mockery,
tell him
my pleasure in this little thing,
this tiny statue that I found at dawn,
roused me
from my old poignant lethargy,
nostalgia for green things,
tree and forest,
(that witchery of wood-land
to enfold me)
that threatens to include
and draw me back,
back from holocaust of human beauty,
tell to your king,
the prince Hippolytus,
that human frailty and mortal commerce
tempt me now
more
than any tree or forest
or any cataract
or mountain-torrent;
tell to your lord,

your prince Hippolytus
 that Artemis chooses
 actually as a goddess,
 love, love, love, love
 that mocks the lure of forests,
 love that enchants the sea-fowl and the
 beast;

say
 is she least,
 least of the creatures that command her
 love?

is Artemis less,
 than mole
 or foraging ferret?
 less than the panther
 than the gull or owl?
 O it were ill and I were ill-advised
 thus to continue lost,
 alone,
 no mate ;
 is it too late?
 go ask your king,
 pray piteous with my voice,
 moreover — touch his soul with sing-
 ing,
 sing —

BOY *Bring myrrh and myrtle-bud,
 (sings). bell of the snowy head
 of the first asphodel —*

PHÆDRA. Ah that,

that answers well,
and any other;
O make most piteous prayer,
lure him with flowers —

Boy. Lady,
I will.

PHÆDRA. Aye,
let him question you,
say I am tall and lovely,
frail, tender,
and yet bold,
speak of my eyes,
my hands,
my hair's
strange, flexible texture
and its gold.

Boy. Yes,
I was always told
the goddess
had a head-band and a dress
falling in curious folds
like this,
and curious ear-rings
and gold bracelets.

PHÆDRA. Aye,
it is this,
this that includes me in the list of
spirits,
only the high-born
or Olympic race

are tall and gold —
 BOY *Frost of the citron-flower,*
(sings). *petal on petal, white*
wax of faint love-delight.

PHÆDRA. Aye,
 you are sure,
 you know me,
 but beware,
 come secretly,
 let him keep secret
 all this meeting-place,
 lest it be imminent death.

MYRRHINA. Aye,
 death were imminent —

PHÆDRA. Let him seek out
 this statue,
 this still place,
 just as Orion's belt shines on the water.

BOY. He shall be here.

PHÆDRA O queen,
(raises her O bird,
arms in O star.

prayer to-
ward the
sea).

(Lapse of time indicated by darkness or
curtain. It is night just before dawn.
The little pavilion or tent has been built
up.)

VOICES. *Where is the nightingale,
in what myrrh-wood and dim?*
(*Music continues distant.*)

MYRRHINA. Say rather
where the hymn
the chant of maidens
standing still and tall,
inviolat maidens
of chaste mien
and all,
all white and golden
like white lily flowers;
where is the nightingale?
nay ask,
where,
where the host
and the enchanted dance?

VOICES. *Where is the bird of fire,
in what packed hedge of rose?*
(*Continues distant.*)

MYRRHINA. Nay rather
where,
where,
where
perfection of those lilies,
tall and slim,
each perfect separate yet joined
again beautiful,
as separate pearls
make one whole beauty

of a diadem ;
O where
the wonder
of that dance,
magic of sea and wind?

VOICES. *Bird, bird, bird, bird we cry,
hear, pity us in pain —*

(Distant.)

MYRRHINA. And I,
I cry again,
where,
where,
where
is that most sainted tread
of holy feet?
where is the dance
and the enchanted beat
that mocks the waves' enchanted
rise and fall?
where, where are all the maidens,
tenuous, slim,
like wild white lilies,
rising on tall stems?

*(A chorus of maidens has appeared, ghosts
about the statue's plinth.)*

O rare perfection,
O fair,
O wild
infinite loveliness,

O grace
and beauty.

CHORUS. *O love, peace,
never in any porch
or portico
can love come,
never to us,
eternal, tenuous,
who died young,
long ago,
long ago.*

MYRRHINA. O beauty
O infinite grace,
so does she come,
so does she answer us,
praying for peace.

CHORUS. *O love cease,
never to us at home,
guiding the lowly loom,
never to us afar,
gathering early bloom
of earthly maiden-flower,
did love come.*

MYRRHINA. She speaks;
the holy lily-flower,
stripped of all passion,
tells of passion fairer —

CHORUS. *We are the answer,
message-bearers,
we answer prayer,*

*ah let the night come black,
for we have conjured back,
her, her, her.*

*(The ghosts fade away. The nightingale
song dies down. Enter PHÆDRA from
tent.)*

PHÆDRA. Ah,
it was sweet.

MYRRHINA. O lady,
swift,
prepare,
prepare to flee
this shore,
this sanctity.

PHÆDRA. Nay,
I have made it mine,
have made it Love's.

MYRRHINA. Not hers,
not hers,
not hers.

PHÆDRA. I say
that I have pledged this place
to fair
infinite Aphrodite.

MYRRHINA. Lady, I pray
come home.

PHÆDRA. Home?

MYRRHINA. Back to the palace —

PHÆDRA. Of whom?

MYRRHINA. — the king.

PHÆDRA. My king rests here.

MYRRHINA. Queen,
queen,
beware,
I have seen curious things.

PHÆDRA. And I have felt
the actual touch of wings,
hers,
soft,
and Eros' feathers.

(Enter HIPPOLYTUS from tent.)

HIPPOLYTUS. Pardon, my thought was dark,
(to the statue). I had forgotten quite,
Latmos, your fairest hill;

I had forsworn all joy,
how could a man forget
tale of your shepherd boy?

in slight Endymion's name,
turn, turn and love again
for young Endymion's sake;

by cliff, by wood and lake,
by elder-grove and thicket,
I sought and sought your face;

how could a mortal know
(love's meanest neophite)
that love was always near?

PHÆDRA. Yes,

I am here.

HIPPOLYTUS. What do *you*
by this shore?

PHÆDRA. I come like you,
Hippolytus,
for prayer.

HIPPOLYTUS. Say rather
to defile a sanctity.

PHÆDRA. Hippolytus —

HIPPOLYTUS. O what a snare,
a cheat —

PHÆDRA. Hippolytus —

HIPPOLYTUS. To creep to the goddess' sanctity
to spy.

PHÆDRA. Hippolytus —

HIPPOLYTUS. I cry
to all the holy mountain-side —

PHÆDRA. Hippolytus —

HIPPOLYTUS. — hear,
help me to avenge
this blasphemy.

MYRRHINA. Lady,
O come away.

PHÆDRA. Hippolytus,
Hippolytus,
I say,
I love you more,
more,
more

(yet, is it possible ?)
than before.

HIPPOLYTUS. O peace,
no more
of all that palace-rite,
that cult of incense
and of tropic flowers,
I say no more,
no more —

PHÆDRA. Last night —

HIPPOLYTUS. Aye,
aye,
aye,
aye,
last night —

PHÆDRA. — I lay —

HIPPOLYTUS. — sweetly —

PHÆDRA. — from dusk almost till day —

HIPPOLYTUS. — with Artemis.

MYRRHINA. O do not speak,
do not speak,
mistress —

PHÆDRA. Myrrhina,
have no fear,
I know,
I know that he lay here —

MYRRHINA. — with Artemis.

PHÆDRA. Yes,
yes,
yes,

yes,
I know,
'twas Artemis.

HIPPOLYTUS. No more
her favour,
she is gone —

PHÆDRA. No,
no,
no,
no,
no —

HIPPOLYTUS. I know that she is gone,
I know that I will never meet her
further
save in the storm
and in the icy river.

PHÆDRA. No,
no,
no,
no,
say rather in some other arms
you'll feel her shape,
that in some other form
count her heart-beat,
so many and many and many a one has
found —

HIPPOLYTUS. Found infamy —

PHÆDRA. Nay,
but a goddess in a woman's arms.

- HIPPOLYTUS. Away
and tempt me not,
for I am tired
of all this old and worn-out play,
this thread-bare plot
of love and mischief.
- PHÆDRA. Hippolytus —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Cease,
go to the king,
my father.
- MYRRHINA. As I entreat her.
- HIPPOLYTUS. She is worn out and mad —
- PHÆDRA. Nay only sad,
sad,
sad —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Sadness of vile humanity;
humanity and sadness of its kind
have no place by this holy driven sea —
- PHÆDRA. Ah me —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Humanity and stale and perilous lust
have no place by this coast —
- PHÆDRA. Ah me —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra —
- PHÆDRA. My child —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Not thine,
not of thy king —
- PHÆDRA. Your father —
- HIPPOLYTUS. And your lover —
- PHÆDRA. Pity me —
- MYRRHINA. O blind, infatuate —

PHÆDRA. 'tis so with womenkind,
and I was happy for a little while.

MYRRHINA. O grief,
O guile
of love.

PHÆDRA. For many and many and many
a desolate night,
I lay and tossed,
ill, wan, home-sick and desperate,
having foul dreams,
ill thought
of no good portent,
O I was hopeless,
lonely in the palace,
bereft of friendship
and love's loveliest solace,
last night,
last night,
(O night,
luminous with phosphorescence
and more bright
than day-star climbing heaven's stair
at noon)
I slept.

HIPPOLYTUS. Lady,
I know your dream;
I feel your thought,
pardon my own impetuous boorishness,
last night,
last night, I too,

lay bathed in phosphorescence
like white dew.

PHÆDRA. Last night,
last night
I slept,
soul, body, spirit and thought.

Last night,
last night
it seems,
peace came
and dreams.

HIPPOLYTUS. You will, I trust
so sleep
for many and many
another beauteous night.

PHÆDRA. Not many,
Theseus' son.

MYRRHINA. You are wan,
pale and blown ceaseless
lady, by this wind,
by this sea-wind and chill,
scattering foam,
white in the dawn.

PHÆDRA. Fasten my scarf,
straighten my comb—

MYRRHINA. Ah,
you are ill—

PHÆDRA. —for she and I
have won.

MYRRHINA. Won?

PHÆDRA. In a contest
for a prince —
with death.

MYRRHINA. Not death,
not death —

PHÆDRA. Did I say love?
did I accomplish it?

MYRRHINA. Too well —

PHÆDRA. I know how well
for she,
she,
she has come.

MYRRHINA. Lady,
O lady, who?
and where,
where,
where?

PHÆDRA. There where the elder-blossom
flecks the tide.

MYRRHINA. It is sea-foam that drifts
and scatters wide.

PHÆDRA. She stands in lily-blossoms
to her knees.

MYRRHINA. Nay, it is froth and spindrift
of the seas.

PHÆDRA. She stands with wood-flowers
wound about her head,
bound with bright silver,
and a silver band

clasps all her kirtle
 showing innocent thighs,
 and all her lovely features mock at me,
 and O her eyes,
 her eyes,
 her eyes,
 her eyes —

MYRRHINA. O lady,
 lady,
 lady.

PHÆDRA. — speak
 (for her tongue disdains)
 “queen,
 pitiful small queen
 and Cretan lady,
 what,
 what to mine
 is your small stricken disenchanted
 beauty?”

MYRRHINA. Come,
 Come away.

PHÆDRA. No, no, I'll stay
 forever and forever
 here.

HIPPOLYTUS. Lady
 I was unjust and cruel
 I fear—

PHÆDRA. Child of a king—

HIPPOLYTUS. Forgive me,
 I was wild with ecstasy.

PHÆDRA. I will forgive
if you make prayer for me.

HIPPOLYTUS. To whom,
poor queen?
what, lady,
shall I say?

PHÆDRA. Pray,
pray,
the first —

HIPPOLYTUS. *She?*

PHÆDRA. Ah,
is she ever uppermost
in your thought?

HIPPOLYTUS. What would you?

PHÆDRA. Ask another —

HIPPOLYTUS. There is no other
when this one is near.

PHÆDRA. Your mother.

HIPPOLYTUS. Hippolyta?

PHÆDRA. For the stark beauty
of the name she bore
like a bright crown
or an enchanter's mitre —

HIPPOLYTUS. Hippolyta —

PHÆDRA. — make some
authentic prayer.

HIPPOLYTUS. I will entreat
the water and the dawn.

(*Exit PHÆDRA into tent.*)

MYRRHINA. The stars are almost gone.

HIPPOLYTUS. O stars drop,
one,
one,
one by one,
into the frozen rivers
or the sea,
O stars cease intimate dance
woven with minstrelsy,
cease, cease your song;
the day is almost come;
O stars
so pale
after your night of joy
and ecstasy.

MYRRHINA. The dawn —

HIPPOLYTUS. O dawn
arise,
leave your low couch
and shine
across the world,
give every Grecian city
light, invoke
on each tall hill
the tallest ash or pine,
shine,
and resplendent cast
the stars
into the water;
have you need of gems

after a night
so luminous
with dreams?

MYRRHINA. She comes —

HIPPOLYTUS. And now
wandering o'er the cliff
her shoes take fire,
her sandals
sewn with pearl
cold in the dew
are riven and inset
with fire-opal;
O dawn
now you have come,
you bring a message;
in your hands a phial
of distilled dew
of healing,
in your wings
fragrance and light
of rose
and alabaster.

O dawn,
pour
peace of holy healing,
rain your power
across the islands
and the Grecian water.

MYRRHINA And you,
 (*to the lady,*
 statue). O lady of this loveliest sand,
 pity and understand.
 (*Silence and short pause. MYRRHINA*
 looks around in sudden apprehension.)

PHÆDRA Aye,
 (*from with-* aye,
 in tent). aye,
 aye,
 aye,
 aye,
 pity me,
 pity me,
 pity me,
 and draw near.

*(Lapse of time indicated by darkness
 or curtain. It is day. The little
 pavilion or tent has been removed.
 Enter HYPERIDES.)*

HYPERIDES. What do you here?

HIPPOLYTUS. I offer in this dazzling day,
 fresh prayer.

HYPERIDES. Prayer?

HIPPOLYTUS. For that sick lady there.

HYPERIDES. Lady —
 to whom then
 do your words refer?

HIPPOLYTUS. For Phædra

who lies ill there
in the tent.

HYPERIDES. Gods,
are you mad?
you meant —

HIPPOLYTUS. Meant?

HYPERIDES. Prayer
for the Cretan princess,
Athens' queen,
Phædra,
no more an exile
on this shore.

HIPPOLYTUS. Dead?

HYPERIDES. Were you then so intent
upon your prayer,
your worship of this chaste
and distant lady
that you did not see
that other,
broken,
in her death so still,
that body wan and white
as scattered foam,
they draped in purple
and took reverently —

HIPPOLYTUS. Where?

HYPERIDES. Back to her lord,
Theseus,
veiled and slight,
wan as a bride

within her bridal chamber.

HIPPOLYTUS. Ah,
I remember.

HYPERIDES. Come,
come,
my prince,
surely —

HIPPOLYTUS. Yea,
I remember,
she was white and fair,
and I, I
rested with my lady there —

HYPERIDES. Hi — st —

HIPPOLYTUS. In a bright tent
built up of fragrant cedar.

HYPERIDES. Not *here*?

HIPPOLYTUS. Aye,
but it's gone,
the whole thing was a dream;
so gods are wont
to show on earth
their splendour,
stooping to mortals,
and so disappear —

HYPERIDES. My lord
Hippolytus
attend —
you are struck mad,
blinded with your old fever,
the king allowed last night

by some bad error
the queen to sleep
here by this frozen shore ;

the servants of the queen
built up a tent,
circled it with rare flowering bush
of myrtle ;
her girls sang here.

HIPPOLYTUS. No,
no,
no,
no,
no,
that was a dream.

HYPERIDES. A dream ?

HIPPOLYTUS. The tent,
the flowering plants,
the myrrh in baskets,
the myrtle-trees that stood there.

HYPERIDES. My prince,
it was a very plausible fact,
only the king regrets —

HIPPOLYTUS. Regrets ?

HYPERIDES. That he gave in
to that strange fantasy
of Phædra.

HIPPOLYTUS. Fantasy ?

HYPERIDES. That she should rest

afar out of the palace,
aye,
even from the garden
and her favourite fountain
and sleep here.

HIPPOLYTUS. Hyperides,
you jest —

HYPERIDES. I jest?

HIPPOLYTUS. Unspeakable untimely jeer —

HYPERIDES. Ah, if it were —

HIPPOLYTUS. Myself,
Hyperides,
I lay within this tent,
myself, I slept,
held close —

HYPERIDES. Tell not this thing —

HIPPOLYTUS. To you,
to you, I tell
how secretly,
how exquisitely
I was favoured —

HYPERIDES. No more —

HIPPOLYTUS. — of *her*.

HYPERIDES. Alas,
alas,
'twas Phædra.

HIPPOLYTUS. No,
no,
no,
no,

you err.

HYPERIDES. Prince you are mad
and Phædra is your mother—

HIPPOLYTUS. Aye, like Hippolyta
and this one, this other—

HYPERIDES. You fool.

HIPPOLYTUS. Fool?

HYPERIDES. She worked on you
with diabolic power,
offered mayhap
some cup,
engendered with those Cretan serving-
girls
some charm,
something,
some evil
from her perilous east,
and harm.

HIPPOLYTUS. There was no charm,
no diabolic cup,
only the peace
and favour of the goddess.

HYPERIDES. Come,
come
and summon all your memory,
come prince and king,
arise from this dark sloth,
wake up.

HIPPOLYTUS. I am awake,
stark and alert,

and O, her hands
were cool.

HYPERIDES. Listen,
my pitiful friend —

HIPPOLYTUS. The end
was beautiful.

HYPERIDES. You are distraught
by Phædra's death.

HIPPOLYTUS. How died she then?

HYPERIDES. O,
a most pitiful end.

HIPPOLYTUS. Speak on.

HYPERIDES. The silken tassels of her girdle swung
from the tent pole,
there Phædra hung awhile and cried
most piteously,
aye,
aye,
aye,
aye,
aye,
aye,
pity me,
pity me,
pity me,
and draw near.

HIPPOLYTUS. How did you hear
this thing?

HYPERIDES. From her nurse
and Myrrhina —

HIPPOLYTUS. Then it is really over?

HYPERIDES. Phædra lies
covered with myrtle flowers
and the death purple.

HIPPOLYTUS. How was it that I missed all this?
You see obviously your tale is crass in-
vention
and you lie.

HYPERIDES. Nay, king,
you were intent, they say,
embraced the white plinth of the god-
dess here,
deep, deep in intimate prayer.

HIPPOLYTUS. I slept, perhaps.

HYPERIDES. Yes,
mercifully bereft
of knowledge of this strange and hid-
eous end.

HIPPOLYTUS. By *this* white sand.

HYPERIDES. Yes,
by the goddess' shrine.

HIPPOLYTUS. But she,
how came that amorous queen
to choose *this* place?

HYPERIDES. They say,
stricken with fever,
hot and hot and hot,
she sought the cleansing tide
and prayed the goddess.

HIPPOLYTUS. Ah,

you *have* lied.

HYPERIDES. Lied?

HIPPOLYTUS. You say the queen was hot,
again was stricken,
burnt and burning away,
but I, I say
the thing that held me
was a broken bird,
with arms cold like a sea-gull from the
sea,
I say (and I repeat) those hands were
cold,
and O, the white was luminous
and not mortal,
and no mortal gold
was that gold lock
that slid across my eyes.

HYPERIDES. Listen, my prince,
all my intent to save
were traitorous toward Athens' king,
I must speak out,
speak truth
for your sake,
for the sake of that lost queen,
tell no one,
no one,
no one
of this thing —

HIPPOLYTUS. One does not speak
save to an intimate —

HYPERIDES. Speak to no intimate even,
speak to none —

HIPPOLYTUS. Yes,
it were wrong,
for that love
was no evanescent thing,
nor that a mortal.
O cold, O listless wing —
she lay as a bird broken
by wind strength,
and had no power to raise
a head that faltered like a broken
flower ;
she had no power to lift
a head gone listless
on its flower stalk ;
she could not move nor walk ;
O goddess,
child-like
and so pitiful,
you,
all so swift and wild and beautiful,
you all so strong, so fearless,
never tired
of following the wild things on the
hill,
how could you lie so still?

How could I tell,
tell anyone of this,

this goddess swept here
like a wind-swept gull?

Call me my steeds,
is there a mortal yet
arises
after resting with a goddess,
other than wild and passionate and
glad
bring me my steeds,
my champing ones,
my chariot.

HYPERIDES. King,
you are over-wrought and wild and see
the wind howls ominously.

HIPPOLYTUS. Aye, after such a night of star and
gold,
the wind drives cold.

HYPERIDES. See how the spray is sweeping from
the sea —

HIPPOLYTUS. As snow blown from the peak of some
tall tree —

HYPERIDES. Hear how the wind is whipping up
the sand —

HIPPOLYTUS. As silver and as white as her head-
band —

HYPERIDES. Hear how the tide moans perilously
along —

HIPPOLYTUS. As low, as soft, as ominous as her
song.

Call me my chariot,
I would flout the waves
and still my gladness
lest I tell this thing
to all the Athenians,
shouting riotous.

ACT III

(The same strip of seacoast. HIPPOLYTUS lies where he has been flung from his chariot, at the base of the statue. Enter HELIOS.)

HELIOS. I,
I who lead the sea-men on the ship,
telling my will by dolphin
or bright gull,
sending the softest wind
to waft ashore
those who implore my guidance
and my piloting at night,
I,
I who sent aright
but lately one bright sail
to Syracuse,
returning to this shore
to turn about
another floundering
and to waft another
beyond pro-pontis
into quiet water,
I,
while I stilled the gale
and kept the sea silent with my en-
chantment,
heard

even while I loitered
by this salty reef,
this
(that sundered all my will
from sail and shoal)
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

HELIOS. She is the help of huntsmen
who invoke
her aid
in searching out the pleasant lair
of the hill lion
fathering his whelps,
of fox
and lynx
and panther
and wild bear;
she is the friend of huntsmen
who implore
her aid
in snaring snipe or water-fowl,
she answers when the lowliest fisher
calls
seeking her help

to net
the clumsy school
of leaping wrasse
or blue-fish
or white tunny;
she knows the haunt
even of the finny tribe
who leap the wave-crest silently
or seek
in the cave depth
their shelter,
or else hide
under the lee-side
of the weedy rock,
she knows the shell-fish
burrowing in the sand,
seeking the wash and shelter of the
tide.

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

HELIOS. So
since none hide,
since none escape her eyes,
vigilant huntress,
pilot and ships' guide,
since none, none, none
escape her luminous feet,
since no bird falters

that she does not seek
either to shelter
loosening from the trap,
or to grant
sudden, painless and swift death,
how,
since her feet run to untrap the fowl
taken too soon
with birdlets
left to die,
does she whose eyes
penetrate lair and hollow,
the sea-crest and the hill-crest
and the shallow
gold and white streamlet
hastening to the bay,
how,
how does she delay,
while this faint breath
even while it falters
summons
Artemis?

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

HELIOS. O white,
O luminous maid,
have the wild hills provoked
a blame so sure

a shame so perilous?
for how could you ignore
one made so piteous,
broken by your snare?
following your beauty
he was dazed and fell
down the precipitous shelf,
or some beast tore
this huntsman
lying broken on the shore;
lady,
O turn,
I,
I,
I,
I implore;
shall base men desecrate
Delphi?
shall Delos' mart
excel its fane
and the merchant
the old temple worshipper?

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

HELIOS. O pause, pause, pause and press
your own white glaive
into that snow of breast,
teach us who doubt

that you have god-like veins,
that you too beat
to joy and ecstasy,
O must I think that you are some
 cold sprite,
some demon of ill nature
and small spite?
must I then say you are not beautiful?
what high enchantment of the moun-
 tain shale
teaches that man is less,
less than the sea-swept rock
or windy cliff?

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

HELIOS. O turn,
O turn and bless
this stricken form,
these whitest hands that yearn,
yearn upwards
toward your snow-encrusted thickets,
O turn,
turn,
hesitate,
place cold snow
on this fevered brow
and limbs
burnt with despair;

O beautiful,
stark,
glittering,
spirit of light and air,
have you no pity,
no heart anywhere?

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis,
Artemis.

(*Enter ARTEMIS.*)

HELIOS. O Delian lady,
pillaging afar
the slopes of Pelion
for the spotted deer,
how can you be so fair?
how can you be so wild and beautiful
and yet so heartless?
how,
how could you bear
to track the red-fox
to his cavernous lair?
how could you follow
the lynx,
the wild-cat
and the lordlier panther,
spurning this stricken prey
calling you here?

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,

Artemis,
Artemis —
HELIOS. O,
O thou heartless,
O thou passionless maid,
O you should fly
as some insidious plague
the tyrannous green-wood
and its poisonous shade
that works like some still poison
in the blood
until men turn and hate
the city portal
and the city gate,
until they shun as ill
all, all man's wisdom,
all art's subtleties,
and worship and call good
only the haunted shade
of the dark wood.

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis,
Artemis —

(Enter ARTEMIS)

ARTEMIS. Silence then both of you
with your indictments
and your tyrannies,
how can you judge the true,
the upright,
righteous

or the holy man?
how can you know
what hindered,
what prevented
or what span
of severing sea divided?
am I a mortal
or some fickle maid
that you must rail,
must summon,
must acclaim me cruel?
what do you know,
what feel?
O but speak not,
I know
from long and bitter intimacy
what you,
O king,
will say.

HELIOS.

What can I speak,
what is there left to say,
O Delian lady,
clambering the height
of mountains,
searching levels of the shore,
following the sea-tide with the glim-
mering fish,
guardian of sea-men,
present help to guide
the fisher

struggling with the shoal and tide,
O Delphian,
ever present help,
saviour and guardian,
what,
what can I say,
what can I ask
but how,
how missed you this?

ARTEMIS.

O Delphian
high enchanter
and arch-mage,
O prophet,
O harp-player,
O most sage
giver of wisdom,
maker of the seven
most potent sayings
that the ears of men
(not yet initiate
to godly rite)
may hear,
may speak,
may ponder,
yet retain sanity,
even their mortality
nor break,
stricken and riven
by your holy flame,
O king,

O great
whose name
the distant Lydians
and near isles acclaim,
judge me
and hate.

HELIOS.

O Delian,
O most beautiful,
most fleet,
O words that fly
like winged things
flying late
back to the sand
and sand-dunes of the south,
O chaste,
O scornful mouth,
O heaven's beauty,
holy maidenhood,
O fair and good,
O Delian,
white like flame,
what is it?
what acclaim is lacking?
tell me what altar
lacks its altar-cake?
tell me what temple
has neglected you,
and I shall rise
(whether it be far Scythia
or near isle)

and I shall plague that people
with dire plague
of fire
or dearth of water.

ARTEMIS. Most imminent pest —
naught can dispel that plague.

HELIOS. What rends you,
what distresses you, proud maid?

ARTEMIS. A plague has entered,
taken of my best.

HELIOS. Speak, tell me what affliction,
I will heal.

ARTEMIS. Not even you, Pæon,
can cleanse this ill.

HELIOS. Spirit of Delos,
you ignore my fame.

ARTEMIS. But none, none, none
dare flaunt that spirited name.

HELIOS. Speak, speak that name
and I will cope with it.

HIPPOLYTUS. Artemis, Delian Artemis,
your kiss —

ARTEMIS. Beware, beware words
subtle and so far —

HIPPOLYTUS. I breathe in pain, in pain,
with little breath —

ARTEMIS. Words deadly, deadly
as the viper's hiss —

HIPPOLYTUS. Your kiss, Artemis,
Artemis, your kiss —

- ARTEMIS. In this, this place
inviolat and blest?
- HIPPOLYTUS. Love makes more sure, more sacred
holy things —
- ARTEMIS. O cruel, bitter, cruel
insatiate queen —
- HELIOS. Who is this queen,
cruel and insatiable?
- ARTEMIS. Invidious and helpless
with white doves —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Fair — fair — her doves drew here
her fiery car —
- ARTEMIS. Silence — no more — no more —
no more — no more —
- HELIOS. Speak one of you,
explain this curious thing —
- ARTEMIS. Treachery unspeakable
and perjury —
- HELIOS. I will be fair,
I will sift wrong from right —
- ARTEMIS. There is no right
where all is basely done —
- HELIOS. Your desperate plight — say lad,
what caused it then?
- HIPPOLYTUS. Love sank a moment,
listless after flight —
- ARTEMIS. Love seized and like a ravaging hawk
tore outright —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Love hovered till his wings
brushed all my soul —

- ARTEMIS. Love took rapacious
and devoured whole —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Love reconciled the cold hills
to the stars —
- ARTEMIS. Love scorched the thickets
and destroyed the flowers —
- HIPPOLYTUS. Love stood and with his sandals
trod like wine —
- ARTEMIS. He fouled and trampled
all my fair white shrine —
- HIPPOLYTUS. —my heart
till ecstasy and intoxicant —
- ARTEMIS. —and blasphemed
all this holy shore of mine —
- HIPPOLYTUS. —filled with its fervour
my enchanted spirit —
- ARTEMIS. —till it is threatened
and no more my own —
- HIPPOLYTUS. —and all my soul was lifted
as with wine —
- ARTEMIS. —but desperate
that shone so fair and pure —
- HIPPOLYTUS. —and all my spirit
and my soul were joined —
- ARTEMIS. —and the wild beauty now
is gone from here —
- HIPPOLYTUS. —forever and forever
with my veins —
- ARTEMIS. —and all the sanctity
and holiest grace —

HIPPOLYTUS. —my flesh, my hands, my feet —
all, all was spirit.

HELIOS. O god and mortal cease.

(Enter BOY, not perceiving the group.)

BOY. There is no town in Greece
ignores his fame,
there is no fane
in island
or the furtherest sands
but charts his name,
there is no temple
but red-hyacinth and cyclamen
frame
a crown
on the white altar; no man stands
with comfortless hands;
none pray him but he sends
answer,
none turn away
with empty hands.

ARTEMIS. O destiny —

BOY. There is no star
that may ignore his fire,
no altar burns
but he claims share
of every hecatomb;
he knows the blinding desert
and the strands
pale in the noon-day,

parched and comfortless,
he heals all thirst;
he knows the lands
that claim the northern crown
and none go down
into the avid sea
but he accounts,
saves,
yea and spares.

HELIOS.

O ecstasy —

BOY.

There are no tears
that his fire does not heal,
no fears
driving the herdsman
gathering his sheep,
the sailor with the stars,
the merchant in the desert,
but he hears,
none, none may pray too late
for he even at the last
remains when all the gods are silent
and forsake
altar and worshippers.

(He turns.)

ARTEMIS.

What do you here?

BOY.

I come after night's ecstasy
for prayer.

ARTEMIS.

Do you not know?
did you not hear?

- BOY. I heard the linnets
in the woods above.
- ARTEMIS. Did you not hear
the treachery of Love?
- BOY. I heard the plover
following the gull.
- ARTEMIS. Do you not see Death
hovering for this soul?
- BOY. Alas — alas —
my prince — Hippolytus —
- ARTEMIS. He lies here shattered
by his broken car.
- BOY. O loveliest — Athens' loveliest
lost star —
- ARTEMIS. O body stricken,
heart and soul undone —
- BOY. O being whole, now finished
and made one —
- ARTEMIS. One, one in body,
broken in his soul —
- BOY. His soul is welded
in ecstatic heat —
- HELIOS. His hands are broken
and those beauteous feet —
- ARTEMIS. His heart is taken
and his soul is gone —
- BOY. His hands and side
blossom with holy wound —
- ARTEMIS. His soul and body
are broken and defamed —

- BOY. His soul is beautiful
in Love's great name —
- ARTEMIS. His body pallid,
wan and without fame —
- BOY. His body bright
with red and luminous blood —
- ARTEMIS. His body is disgraced
by treacherous love —
- BOY. His body blossoms
as Adonis did —
- ARTEMIS. He has no place now
in my sacred grove —
- BOY. He shows more holy
for the stain of love —
- ARTEMIS. No host of lilies
by the Delian tree —
- BOY. He has a place, fair
in infinity —
- ARTEMIS. He has no place
where any god may come —
- HELIOS. He has his home forever
in white song —
- ARTEMIS. I speak and cast away
all claim of his —
- HELIOS. You are less strong, O Delian,
than love —
- ARTEMIS. O desecration
and unhappiness —
- HELIOS. O exquisite consummation
and sheer bliss —

- ARTEMIS. Song, song, song, song it is
that shatters all —
- HELIOS. Song, song, song baffles
the fears of death —
- ARTEMIS. Then is all, all forgiven
in song's name —
- HELIOS. All, all lost beauty
shelters in its fane —
- BOY. He dies, he falls,
fainting with little breath —
- HELIOS. Hippolytus, O fair,
O beauteous name —
- BOY. He calls, O lady, hear
Hippolytus —
- HELIOS. O evil fate, O dire
O hapless deed —
- ARTEMIS. O evil deed, O dire,
O hapless fate —
- BOY. Speak, comfort him,
he calls — he calls —
- ARTEMIS. — too late.
- BOY. Alas,
alas,
I go,
I haste
to bring the Trœzians
who may yet prevent
this thing.

(*Exit Boy.*)

- HIPPOLYTUS O beauty of the marble altar base,
(*stands*). O land I must forsake,
Athens —
- ARTEMIS. He calls now to the city
of his birth —
- HIPPOLYTUS. O halls and haunts of mirth,
O citizens laughing and with quiet
hands,
bring one and all,
all to this citadel —
- HELIOS. Befriend him
lest he fall —
- HIPPOLYTUS. — the violets of her beauty,
and all, all the lilies
brightening the fields
in all, all Attica,
in every deme —
- ARTEMIS. For whom?
who then?
- HIPPOLYTUS. For her
who stands beside the fountains
with her brother —
- ARTEMIS. For us —
for us —
- HIPPOLYTUS. — and from all,
all the distant
other-lands,
roses
in pious hands.
(HIPPOLYTUS *falls forward*.)

ARTEMIS. Now he has taken what my flame
would spare;
white crystal of pure water
has more power
than blinding golden fire,
yet he has taken,
winnowing the air,
polluted what was fair.

HELIOS. None may affront his name,
not one of us,
ah cruel Eros,
none may dispel the gloom
that his name tells,
all, all must fail,
thou, I and luminous God;
Eros is still man's tyrant
and god's king;
O queen of Delphi,
O white powerful flame,
has he then spoken,
has he said your name?
has he, the least,
O very greatest one,
affronted you
and shamed?

ARTEMIS. No, no, O king,
O prophet,
O harp-player,
mage and the first
giver of wisdom,

Love has not vanquished,
has not stricken me,
Love has not stayed my wild feet
from the hills
nor made me shudder,
glad and white and still,
no song of his
lured me
with poignant note;
no shrill song note
of mine
responded to his piercing flute;
no,

I was mute.

HELIOS.

Then sister,
O beloved,
O most fair,
why do you shiver?
why, why rend the air
with such a face,
uplifted and so white?
no god has yet seen
nay nor borne
so bright
a diadem
wrought with so clear a gem,
no, no god wears
so white a circlet
as that bright one there,
that stark pain

that your stricken forehead
bears.

ARTEMIS. O bright,
O gold,
O king of mysteries
and mystic rite,
O Delphic ruler
of high-priest and white
wan and forsaken Pythian,
you,
you who know
the mysteries beyond death
and before,
speak,
is there one,
one that is more
more tyrannous,
more treacherous
than life?

HELIOS. O white enchantress,
O white lily-bud,
O head so golden,
none such holy brood
did ever white swan
breed beside a river,
nor has God ever
begotten near his throne-room
in high heaven
such, such —
not even the seven Pleiads,

all, all seven
shine like you,
sternly proud;
O virgin, bright, unbroken,
what, what has threatened
if it is not Love?

*(The chorus of maidens appears, ghosts
encircling the body of HIPPOLYTUS.
They dance about the plinth of the
statue.)*

CHORUS. *O love cease,
never in porch or corridor
does love come,
never to us,
eternal, tenuous,
who died young,
long ago,
 long ago.*

ARTEMIS. O peace,
O slow and stately posture,
O pure fire,
thus,
thus do my attendants come,
seeking the soul.

CHORUS. *Never to us,
never to us,
did love come,
never to us who strove,
threading the loom,*

*never to us who sought
dawn and noon,
flame of white flower
whose fire is purer
than love.*

HELIOS. O stately pause,
O royal diadem,
no queen has ever known
so proud,
so stainless and so rare a crown
as this fair ring,
your maidens
who attend you
and who sing.

CHORUS. *Never to us apart
did love thwart
body and soul and mind
with poisonous dart,
searing our happiness,
marring content,
tearing the heart.*

HELIOS. True,
you are right,
there is an ecstasy
in hope,
in these still forms,
in this stern dance,
in pious feet.

CHORUS. *Never, O never roam,
naming her sweet,*

*never invoke,
never entreat
her the dark passion-flower
treading the foam.*

HELIOS. Yet
is it just?
so dear a body lost?
so fair,
so young,
is he yet gone?

CHORUS. *Come,
come to Delos,
follow us home,
arise, arise, let us
over the foam,
sing and give answer,
for life is done.*

HELIOS. Who says
that life is done?
who names the soul's going?
who times the coming of the soul
but she?

CHORUS. *Never, O never,
wandering from home,
ask of another,
"how did love come?
what is love, sister?
what has he done?"
peace, O my dear ones,
questioning none.*

HELIOS. Nay,
nay
be gone,
I feel the web,
the ecstasy, the lure
of peace,
the power
that negates life,
be off,
I see,
I see
the snare.

CHORUS. *Soul, soul, O deathless,
soul, soul, O come,
come, come to Delos,
rest and be done,
done with all passion
pure and alone.*

HELIOS. None, none is pure,
and none, none is alone,
be off,
be gone —

(*The CHORUS fades away.*)

ARTEMIS. King,
king,
what have you done?

HELIOS. Am I,
I,
Pæon
in vain?

ARTEMIS. None may thwart death —

HELIOS. But one —

ARTEMIS. But see,
his face is white,
deep-purple rims his eyes,
his pain is gone,
his hands are quiet,
all his beauty dies
like a parched hyacinth.

HELIOS. Do all the isles
acclaim me?
am I master,
lord, magician, sage?
tell, tell me,
you are tranced and still
though you must know
I am more powerful
than heaven's will
and death must pause
and death must stand amazed
even at the life,
the strength my hands distil,
the spark electric
that bids sick arise
and dead men falter
groping toward the tomb,
peace sister,
come,
have faith in my great mastery,
be strong.

ARTEMIS. O king,
king cease,
he is already dead
and gone to Death,
my soul, my soul, my soul
and all the blest host of immortals
must acclaim him now;
he is gone white,
his brow glazed over
like some restless pool
when ice glazes a surface
that has beat the shore,
gone restful now and clear.

HELIOS. Then
is my fame
so small a thing
that all the altars burn
from Didymus
even to the foaming straits?
am I the king of Delphi
and the isle
that shines like one white petal on the
sea,
Delos,
and of the distant tributary
of golden Asia
and of India's lore?
tell me,
am I the lord of far rare herbs
that heal,

fair branch and bark,
precious from Syria?
am I, I lord of healing,
Pæon, more,
master of spirit,
king of the white fire
that summons mortals
even beyond Styx?
what do you fear?

ARTEMIS. How can I know
if it be love
or death?

HELIOS. Shall death spoil
and shall love spoil
and we stand
and gape here speechless
as at naught at all?
are we then slaves?
where is your kingdom,
where your fire?
Death has insulted our divinity
and Love has stolen:
shall we stand speechless, impotent
nor move?
nay, nay O good
and queenly lady;
no tears fall
but bitter pain
sears all your stricken beauty:
men may stand by and look

and say
half pitiful,
“a goddess grieves,”
not I,
not I,
not I —

ARTEMIS.

We are not always
powerful,
O king
of heaven;
once, once in Sparta
an iron-disc was driven
straight by the wind
against an innocent brow,
and now
that name flowers by the water,
blooms upon the shelves,
its passionate letters
flame beneath our feet,
crying aie, aie forever
its scented bells
wave and distil
pure incense
like white dew,
so cold, so sweet, so new,
and yet so old,
so old
and comfortless.

HELIOS.

O maid so blest,
what is it you reveal?

peace, peace,
what would you tell?
my heart is stricken
by that flower-name,
that name is spoken
and I am a flame
blown heedless in the wind,
I move and breathe
sparsely,
my own heart
god-like and so bold,
fails in its beat,
it beats uncertainly,
my pulse fails,
I grow cold;
what do you hint?
why,
why recall this thing?

ARTEMIS.

As that one flames
immortal on the hills,
let this one still
stand by each harbour,
by each estuary
where ships beach
by the tiny wharf or quay,
a symbol of my love,
an emissary
of faith
and friendship
between god and man.

HELIOS.

Nay,
I embraced a flower
and it was chill
and it was cold
and O no bitterness
can equal that keen sorrow
that I had;
ah piteous lad,
I will spare you that grandeur
of the hills,
that purity
and nullity of flowers,
arise and stand.

ARTEMIS.

And I would keep him
sacred and apart,
and I would have him
chill against my heart,
I, I would cherish,
I would shelter him
turned to a spirit,
holy in my court,
I, I would set him
against Delian marble,
whiter than all,
all the white pillars
of that corridor.

HELIOS.

But I,
I will another thing,
I cry
to all the old dark magic of the seas,

to alter-conjurations beneath waves,
to palace and to blinding corridor
in Egypt,
further
to most distant Asia,
to tributaries
where my kingship fills
the heart of priest
and devote with white fire
so that they burn
desiring death,
knowing there is no help,
no escape other
from my white passion,
my magician's fire;
by all that know me,
all that hold my name
for what it is,
love, god's most passionate flame,
Anax, immortal,
come,
call,
call to Pæon, power
beyond man's thought
or gods' imagining,
listen,
invoke, ye priests
and citizens
initiate to my rite,
myself again,

myself,
distant,
intense
dispassionate flame.

Come,
Pæon,
Pæon,
Power,
myself but beyond shape
of god or man,
come then Myself
abstraction, mystic fire,
lift up,
lift up
as a sun-ray may lift
from a dank marsh,
a broken flower.

(HIPPOLYTUS *stirs*. ARTEMIS *kneels sup-
porting him.*)

HIPPOLYTUS. Love,
you have changed your dress —

ARTEMIS. Child, child —

HIPPOLYTUS. This is so white;
where is the hem
of little budding flowers,
the purple stitches
and the tiny gems
sewn in the girdle?

ARTEMIS. Is this not beautiful?

HIPPOLYTUS. You always were,
but not so kind as now,
just now —
how was it —
all, all the roses
of all other lands
lost colour,
all, all the strands
that bound your head-band
were of purple,
dark purple threads
that bound
the darker purple
of Adonis-flowers
wound in a chaplet;
all, all the roses
of all other lands
lost colour;
and the sands
burnt where you trod —

ARTEMIS. O treacherous god —

HIPPOLYTUS. Nay,
nay,
my sweet,
he was not treacherous,
he found me, led me,
brought me to your feet —

ARTEMIS. Not mine,
not mine,

not mine.

HIPPOLYTUS. Then whose?
but why so shine,
why shone so white,
so cold, so luminous,
who were but now so soft,
so covered
with small flowers —

ARTEMIS. Nay, peace —

HIPPOLYTUS. Your wings were beating
all the perilous night,
I heard Death come
but I did not take fright,
your feet were fire
and cyclamen your clothes,
your robe was purple,
your bright diadem rose,
your feet were luminous
as a riven flame,
Goddess,
O deathless name —

ARTEMIS. O flame,
perfidious —

HIPPOLYTUS. Nay, sweet,
nay, cold and fair,
all, all the air,
acclaimed you,
all the stars hung silent
as we passed;
you held me close;

I breathed the breath of rose;
I could not see your eyes,
so sweet, so kind,
I feared to face you openly
in the wind
that tossed about us,
beating to drive us back,
beating to suffocate and vanquish us;
not that — not that —
no evil Boreas,
no fickle west
wind, nay nor south
could check your beautiful will,
we soared up like a cloud
and fell —

ARTEMIS. Fell where?

HIPPOLYTUS. Far from this coast.

ARTEMIS. He is thrice-lost.

HIPPOLYTUS. O Love,
Love,
Love afar,
no mountain shelter
blossoming with wild-flower,
with lily splendour,
with the summer elder,
no mountain path,
no peak
that breaks the azure
as some tall pillar
slung across with colour,

embroidered with bright gold
 of fir-branch or the slender
 limb of the birch
 with under-leaf
 of silver,
 no peak,
 no mountain
 and no icier shale beyond
 edged with wild crocus,
 not the glacial splendour
 forgets,
 is lost,
 exists
 without Love's altar.

ARTEMIS. All, all is broken
 by her treachery.

HIPPOLYTUS. *Where is the nightingale?*
 I know for I have seen
 his very ledge of fire,
 have dared desire,
 am broken by his flame;
where is the bird of fire?
 I know —
 in a far palace,
 in an orange glade.

ARTEMIS. Pæon,
 O see,
 his mind is changed with rapture,
 this is not
 the Hippolytus.

of old.

HIPPOLYTUS. Gold, gold, gold, gold
her feet,
her hands are ivory and sweet,
sweet, sweet her breath,
the orange and the quince
invented it,
rare, rare her feet,
her hands equable and cool,
her body tall, tall, tall,
only a slight smooth sapling
which a fall of snow
has bent
and conquering, left.

ARTEMIS. I am bereft.

HIPPOLYTUS. Cold, cold
her exquisite feet —

ARTEMIS. Whom does he call,
O king,
whom does he seek?

HIPPOLYTUS. Cold, cold, cold, cold
and wild,
and no lost child
could cling to my arms
and no broken nestling
find shelter
as she found.

ARTEMIS. Now he is lost
and I am comfortless.

HIPPOLYTUS. Tide nears the full —

rose-laurel trees
throw purple shadow —

ARTEMIS. Tell me,
O where,
where,
where?

HIPPOLYTUS. In Cyprus.

ARTEMIS. See he is gone,
is lost,
has thwarted us.

HIPPOLYTUS. Goddess,
my queen,
a kiss.

(ARTEMIS *kisses him.*)

ARTEMIS. Let him go back to death.

(*Enter BOY, followed by HYPERIDES and
the huntsmen.*)

BOY. Here, here he lies.

HYPERIDES. Alas,
torn by the chariot,
broken by the tide.

(*Exit with the dead body of HIPPOLYTUS.*)

HELIOS. Again I fail,
Again I fail to prove
my absolute,
my passionate love for her

who walks as star-dust,
Phosphoros
blown at night
across high perilous frontiers
of the north,
who treads as sea-foam
even the perilous seas,
splendour of Erymanthus and its light,
O queen of Delos,
queen of my high towers
even at Delphi,
hail,
hail
and farewell.

(*Exit* HELIOS.)

ARTEMIS. I heard the intolerable rhythm
and sound of prayer,
I must be hidden
where no mortals are,
no sycophant of priest
to mar my ease;
climbing impassible stairs
of rock
and forest shale
and barriers of trees:

someone will come
after I shun each place
and set a circle,

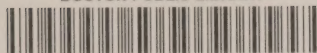
blunt end up,
of stones,
and pile an altar,
but I shall have gone
further,
toward loftier barrier,
mightier trees;
bear, wolf and pard
I will entice with me,
that eyes' black fire
or yellow,
flatter,
conjure,
feed desire,
conspire,
lead me yet further
to some loftier shelf,
untrodden;
unappeased,
I will disport at ease
and wait;
I will engage in thought and plot with
earth
how we may best efface
from Elæa
and all stony Peloponnese,
from wild Arcadia,
from the Isthmian straits,
from Thrace and Locrian hills
(as isles are sunk

in overwhelming seas)
all Grecian cities
with the wild arbutus
and the luminous trees.

THE END

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